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Mass.

Littleton.

Edmund Foster. 1815

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THE

WORKS OF GOD DECLARED BY ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT LITTLETON, DEC. 4, 1815.

On the completion of a Century from the Incorporation of that Town.

BY EDMUND FOSTER, A.M.
Pastor of the Church in said Town.

CONCORD, MASS.
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LITTLETON, Dec. 18, 1815.

SIR,

THE town of Littleton return their most cordial thanks, for the very able and instructive Sermon, by you delivered, the 4th inst. on the Conclusion of a Century since the Incorporation of this Town; and, by the undersigned, their Committee, request a copy of the same for the Press.

SAMUEL HOAR,
JOHN WOOD,
DAVID LAWRENCE.

Rev. EDMUND FOSTER.

LITTLETON, Dec. 28, 1815.

GENTLEMEN,

THE undersigned receives with lively emotions of friendship, the attention of the town of Littleton to the Sermon, delivered before them on the 4th inst. and at their request presents them with a copy of the same for the Press.

EDMUND FOSTER.

SAMUEL HOAR,
JOHN WOOD,
DAVID LAWRENCE,
} *Committee.*

SERMON.

PSALM cxlv—4th verse.

One generation shall praise thy works unto another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

THE great creator did not endow his creatures, in their first existence, with the highest perfections of which they are capable, and for which they were designed.

To man he has given the capacity and the means of acquiring knowledge, and of communicating it to others. It is only by improving his talents, that he can increase them.

Both his knowledge and his happiness were designed to be progressive; nor do we know that the period will *ever be*, either in this world or in the world to come, in which this progression will come to an end.

The state of things around us, and the prospect before us, give constant activity and employment to the noble powers of the human mind.

From one original stock, the innumerable multitude of the human family have proceeded; and in every generation children have been dependent on their parents, reared to manhood by their labour and nursing attention; improved by their instruction and discipline: and after being removed from their immedi-

ate care, they have usually been continued under tutors and governors of an higher grade.

When God had created man, and assigned him his state and probation in this world, he did not dismiss him from his care. The same power, that gave us being, befriends, assists and strengthens us through the whole journey of human life. Our Father worketh hitherto, and we work. Human exertions are so united and blended with a divine agency and providence, that the one cannot exist and progress without the other; and whenever we speak of the doings of men, we also declare the works of God. Under such views should we trace the history of the world from the beginning, through all generations of men, and pursue it to the consummation of all things.

In the infant age of the world, the minds of men were rude and uncultivated, and darkness for a long time was upon the family of the earth. The world was large, and the inhabitants few. They were herdsmen rather than cultivators or mechanics; and whenever convenience invited, they could remove from one place to another without encroaching on the rights of any. To commerce they were strangers, and they subsisted upon their own simple means. Their wants were soon and easily satisfied; and their motives to enterprise and discoveries few and feeble. Science unfolded gradually, and progressed slowly; yet it was never wholly at a stand, but advanced as men multiplied, and has continually increased with time. In some periods it has progressed with greater, at others with less rapidity. Its present improved state was reserved for one of the glories of the christian era.

That the world therefore is not eternal, as some have vainly pretended, is evident from the length of

time in which mankind, upon that supposition, must have remained ignorant of what are now known and considered to be some of the most necessary and useful arts of life. And is it credible, that the eternal succession of generations should produce no men of genius, who would either be awakened by necessity, stimulated by the desire of personal gain, or the thirst of glory and renown, to press their inquiries into nature, and to make discoveries which would at once improve the happiness of mankind and immortalize their own names ?

Is it credible, that mankind should remain through countless ages, down to a late period, ignorant of the art of printing, by which they might communicate knowledge to others, and transmit their discoveries and improvements to posterity in the records of history ? Can we believe that men, for such a length of time, would have known so little of navigation, and nothing of the needle and the mariner's compass ? That they would have remained so ignorant of geography and the earth they inhabited, as to know nothing of this western hemisphere, this vast continent, which is nearly one half of this habitable world ? That they should have known so little either of the means of their internal improvements, and of defence and annoyance of their enemies, and other valuable branches of science as they did, so late as the days of the prophets, and the conclusion of the Jewish age ? If we reject, as we ought, the idea of the past eternity of this world, and believe it of novel existence ; if we limit it to the true period at which the history of Moses has placed it, a period of less than six thousand years, we shall the less wonder at the slow progress of civilization and improvement in the arts ; and that the world continued as it did, in comparative darkness and ignorance.

That we might have a correct knowledge of the world and of events in exact order of succession, time has been divided to us in portions both small and great. It has been measured to us by days and weeks, and months and years, and from thence by hundreds and by thousands of years. The ancients computed their time by genealogies, or generations. By this method the Jewish tribes were kept distinct. In this line of succession the priesthood, under the law, was traced to its origin, the claims to that holy office proved and settled, and many valuable inheritances among the Jews preserved and secured.

By this method it was clearly ascertained and proved that Christ sprang out of Judah, and from the family of David, according to the ancient prophecies.

When Saint Matthew, to prove this point, had enumerated the genealogies, or succession of families, from Abraham to Joseph, the reputed father of our Lord, he gives us a compendious history of the Jewish nation, from its establishment to its overthrow, in the following words: So all the generations, from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations; and from David, until the carrying away into Babylon, are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon, unto the coming of Christ, are fourteen generations.

"The Jews," says a learned writer, "in every one of these several intervals, were under a several and distinct manner of government, and the end of each interval produced some alteration in the state. In the first, they were under judges and prophets, in the second, under kings, and in the third, under Hasmonæan priests. The first fourteen generations brought their state to glory, in the kingdom of David; the second to misery, in the captivity of Babylon; and the third to glory again, in the kingdom of Christ.

"The first begins with Abraham, who received the promise, and ends in David, who received it again more clearly; the second begins with the building of the temple, and ends in the destruction of it; the third begins with their peeping out of misery in Babel, and ends in their accomplished delivery by Christ."

In the history of that long favoured, but finally devoted nation, one generation fully declared the works of God unto another.

We have briefly traced the history and condition of mankind through many generations, to a new era, which commenced at the birth, and under the reign of Messiah, the ancient of days, in which a new order of things appeared.

Though the knowledge and study of genealogies was of great use before the coming of the Messiah, that it might be known distinctly of what tribe and family he was born; yet, after his appearing, it became useless and vain. And those who afterwards gave heed to endless genealogies are reproved by the Apostle Paul, as being ostentatious, and betraying the marks of family pride and destruction.

Christians do not compute time by generations, but by centuries, or periods of an hundred years. And in looking to past events and things, we usually refer to the particular century in which they were known and transacted. The history of the world has been divided to us by these periods, ever since the days of Christ; and we take our dates of time from his birth.

We have already observed that the ages previous to this period were comparatively dark. The high improvements in knowledge and the useful arts seem to have been reserved for the honour and happiness of later times.

The greater portion of new and useful discoveries have been made long since the christian era commenced; and some of the most important of them within the space of five or six hundred years. The twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries were honoured by geniuses, who brought many hidden things to light, and blessed the world with new discoveries. New inventions and improvements in the sciences were quickly followed by a spirit of enterprise. Men soared above their narrow prejudices, and gave a wide range to their thoughts and enquiries. They began to traverse the ocean and to circumnavigate this globe.

A new world was brought to view when Columbus discovered this western continent, in 1492. The discovery was soon followed by emigrations from the old to the new world.

Until now, this large and fairest portion of the earth had been without civilized inhabitants; but wisdom forbade that it should longer remain a den only for beasts and savage men.

Providence usually ripens men for executing its wise designs. In England the reformation from Popery was followed by persecution and blood. Usurpation and tyranny characterized ecclesiastics. The reformers themselves became divided into what we may call Protestants, Dissenters, and Puritans, who, in some respects, differed from both the former. The Puritans, so called, not only rejected Popery in common with their reformed brethren; they not only conscientiously withdrew from the established forms of religion in their country, but they attempted a still further reformation in the dissenting churches, by conforming both their worship and manners more to the simplicity of the gospel; and when oppressed and

persecuted, on account of their opinions and labours, they fled for refuge.

These were the men who first sought a peaceful retreat for themselves and for their posterity, in this then distant and barbarous land.

In their views and pursuits, they were governed more by religion, than by the motives of worldly gain. They preferred exile abroad, to tyranny at home. They had rather submit to the privations, hardships, and dangers of life in a *wilderness* surrounded with *savage* foes, in which they could be favoured by the unmolested enjoyment of liberty and the rights of conscience in the worship of their God, than to endure the spirit of intolerance and persecution in their native country.

At the call of Providence, therefore, these pious pilgrims, like Abraham the father of the faithful, went out, not knowing whither they went. In November, 1620, a company of them reached the American coast, anchored in Cape Cod harbor, and, before landing, formed themselves into a little republic, and then commenced their first settlement in what is now called Plymouth. A few years after, another company from England, bringing with them their religious teachers, arrived at Naumkeag, now called Salem. The number and strength of inhabitants continually multiplied and increased. New societies were formed, and new towns were settled in quick succession. Population and improvement spread far and wide, till they reached the place *we now inhabit ;* an era, my hearers, we have this day assembled to celebrate.

On the third of December, 1715, the then inhabitants of this place, by an act of the legislature, attained to political existence, and were numbered among the

corporations of New-England. During the century past, amidst all those obstacles, occurrences, and changes incident to human affairs, and to life, this town has risen from its infancy to its present population and rank in civil and christian life.

Through nearly the whole hundred years that are now elapsed and gone, the word and ordinances of the gospel have been statedly and constantly enjoyed by the people in this place. They have had three distinct houses of public worship, and three ministers of the sanctuary. The first who was invited and ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, in this town, was the Rev. Benjamin Shattuck. After continuing in the ministry about thirteen years, he was, by agreement with the people of his charge, dismissed from his pastoral office.

He was quickly succeeded by the Rev. and memorable Daniel Rogers. As a minister *he* possessed many valuable gifts and graces, which gave him eminence and distinction among his brethren. In him were united a *penetrating mind* and a *sound judgment*, by which he was able to investigate truth, and detect and refute error.

He was eminently endowed with the gift of prayer, which he assiduously cultivated and improved. In addressing the throne of grace, he greatly excelled; and his prayers on particular occasions were remarkably appropriate and impressive.

His deportment was *always* dignified; in the house of God it was *commanding;* and as an apostle of Christ, he might be truly said to magnify his office. For his wisdom and prudence he was respected at home and abroad. His praise was in all the churches. In their difficulties they looked to him as a counsellor,

and he was useful in settling their debates, adjusting their differences, and healing their divisions. Providence lengthened his life beyond threescore years and ten, when he died in a good old age, and was gathered to the sepulchres of his fathers.

As a son with the Father in the gospel, the speaker was ordained to the ministry, as colleague with your former deceased pastor, and has now almost completed the 35th year of his ministry. Though we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and the ministers of the gospel are not suffered to continue, by reason of death; yet some are spared in the vineyard longer than others. So far as the continuance of a minister is a blessing, you, my hearers, have been singularly favoured. While other towns, younger than this, from various causes, have been often *afflicted* and *disappointed* in their hopes, and had a number of laborers in quick succession; for almost a century you have had but three ministers ordained among you; and the lives and labors of two of them have been continued for more than fourscore and four years. We will record these acts in memory of God's great goodness.

A brief history of this church and town, since they were committed to my care, must be interesting and improving.

In a period short of thirty-five years, 445 persons have died. Of this number, 126 were members of our church. There have been admitted to baptism, 722, including infants and adult persons. 249 have been received to full communion; and the number of communicants at the present time is 136.

Our subject rises in solemn review before us. It evinces this scripture truth, that one generation goeth away and another cometh.

In the short period of my ministry here, the amount of the funerals I have attended, and of the persons we have committed to the tomb, is nearly equal to half the number of the living in this place; and exceeds that of the whole congregation, both great and small, who assemble for worship in this temple at any one time. Among the deceased, are our fathers, our children, our wives, and our most intimate and valuable friends, who once partook of our domestic comforts, of the pleasures of social intercourse, and who ate and drank with us at the table of Christ. Among them also is our former pastor, and the greatest part of his charge. There is scarce a person among us, of considerable age, but has been a mourner, and is still a sufferer under these privations. Some families have been greatly diminished, and the breaches remain unrepaired; others are totally extinct, and nothing of them remains but the monuments of their former lives.

If the number of the dead has been swelled to the above amount in thirty-five years, what would it be if we were to add to it the whole bill of mortality for a century past? Yea, if we take into the account all that death has conquered since the discovery and settlement of this country, how vastly would the number of the dead exceed the whole family of the living?

A brief view of the multiplied labors, hardships, sufferings, and worthy deeds of our ancestors, must be instructive and improving to us their children. *They* drove out the savages; *they* subdued the wilderness before them; *they* instituted religion; *they* founded schools and seminaries of learning; *they* purchased and defended liberty at the expense of their richest blood and treasures; *they* established civil institutions; *they* bequeathed them to their heirs; and we, their

children, enter into their labors and enjoy the blessings of the inheritance. By such splendid deeds does one generation declare God's works unto another. Can we ever forget these things? Shall we neglect to profit by them? And will we not improve upon their labours in our day and generation, and hand down the same blessings with much increase to our children? Indeed, our country is already wakeful and attentive to their duty on these subjects, and is mindful of the interests of posterity. Colleges and academies are multiplied among us. They are liberally endowed, and provided with able instructors, which promise improvement in the liberal and useful arts and sciences.

In this portion of our country we have schools in every town for the education of children in the common and most necessary branches of knowledge.

For many years past, no improvements have been greater than those in our common and school education. These institutions do great honour to our country. They have a friendly aspect on the public sentiment and morals, and a direct tendency to preserve a free government among us.

We have agricultural societies, for improving our knowledge in the first employment of man.

Husbandry is absolutely necessary to our subsistence. It is both useful and ornamental; and in proportion to our improvement in it, our tables will be plentifully furnished, and our country around us become more and more like the garden of God, for its beauty and fertility.

In connexion with husbandry, are placed our manufacturing establishments. By our skill and industry in them, our reputation is increasing, and the wants

and conveniences of life are supplied in rich abundance.

We have many and divers charitable institutions for relieving the indigent of all descriptions. Pious and charitable females, turning their attention particularly to the forlorn of their own sex, have established and endowed asylums for such houseless children of want. They annually take many from wretchedness, and from almost every vice, and place them in these secure abodes. Here they are comfortably fed and clothed, and nursed as with paternal affection; by which they are prevented becoming a public nuisance, and made reputable and useful members of society. Many sons of America have done worthily, but her daughters have excelled them all.

To these and many other valuable institutions, may be added, bible and missionary societies, for the more effectual and rapid diffusion of the knowledge of christianity throughout the great family of man. The present is truly the age of light and improvement, by which present and future generations will be blessed.

If the past century has swept away more than one generation, and the earth is now peopled with a wholly new race of men, and the same order of events must continue, what is the prospect before us? Where shall we and our dear children, in a little time, be? We must rest in our graves, as do others. Probably, at the return of another century, not one of us will be found alive, to declare to others the acts of God.

Brethren, the time is short. Let us work while it is day, and by our labors, transmit something valuable in our turn to the generations that shall follow us, who, in reviewing the history and imperishable monuments

of our lives, may find occasion to say of us—though they are dead, they yet speak to us.

In contemplating the condition in which this society is found, at the close of the past, and on the beginning of a new century, we shall find many things to excite our gratitude, and quicken and increase our exertions.

We have already stated the number of communicants among us, from which it appears, that by the blessing of God this church has had increase and edification. To the honour of your profession and character, my brethren and sisters, I am constrained to say, that during my ministry among you, you have continually kept the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. Our harmony has never been interrupted by a diversity of religious opinions. If any one has had faith differing from another in any point of scripture doctrine, he has had it to himself before God, and has not disturbed others with it.

Though we are many members, we are still but one body, and one bread unbroken. The bitter waters of strife have never broken in to trouble us. Dissensions and divisions have not been known here.

Through the whole of my ministry, this church has never, for once, been specially called together on any matter or concern, except for the choosing of deacons, who, in the proper duties of their office, might assist in the services of the sanctuary, and in maintaining the order and promoting the spiritual interests of the whole body. This state of quietness and harmony I attribute not to my own exemplary vigilance, prudence and faithfulness as a pastor; but to your candor and goodness towards me, and to your love for the peace and prosperity of Zion. Let your light still shine before

men, and your example impart an influence to others. For this shall the world take knowledge of you, that ye are the disciples who have been with Jesus. The head of the church shall also watch over and keep you ; and you shall ever dwell in the secret places of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. The *people* of this town, also, have a just claim to their full portion of honour and respect, on account of the peace and harmony which subsists in it. To your wisdom and prudence among others, it is owing that we have been so little troubled with sectaries. You have continued in the faith as it has been here delivered, and have not been blown about by every wind of doctrine. You have heard the voice of your own shepherd, and strangers ye have not followed. As a society, you have a deep interest attached to you. You should be as emulous of a good reputation and name, as an individual. It will give you the like comfort and security in yourselves, and respect abroad; and when, in the course of events, you shall be called to resettle the gospel among you, it will be eminently useful in commanding a person of character and talents. That I may close my ministry with comfort and honor to myself, and usefulness to you, I would further address myself, both to the church and people in this place.

As this is the last time I shall ever speak, or you will ever hear me, on an occasion like this, let us avail ourselves of this opportunity of renewing our mutual pledges of fidelity and attachment to each other. Hitherto ye have been my support and comfort, and I now beseech you not to withhold them, if the time shall ever come, in which the unavoidable weight and infirmities of age shall press upon me. It must be one

of the greatest evils that can overtake a professional man, if, as soon as his usefulness is impaired or gone, all his early labors must so go into oblivion, as to bring him neither respect, support, or comfort in that evil day; but he must still live forsaken *here* and forgotten *there*. The end of my ministry, and the desire of my heart is, so to promote the true gospel in and among you, as to be able to present you, at last, as a chaste virgin, to Christ. For what is my hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?

Our subject leads us to take into view the interests of the church, and of the world, which are connected with our own, and in which our present and future happiness are involved.

In opening our discourse, we went back to the dark ages of the world, in which both science and religion were in their infancy, and had attained to no great degree of splendor. We briefly traced the history of them through past ages, down to the present. These are but so many events filling up that great map of Providence, sketched out by him who seeth the end from the beginning.

In the course we pursued, we see that population and empire have long since been travelling from east to west, and that the knowledge of christianity has advanced in the same course, with equal pace. For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so also has been the coming of the Son of man in his kingdom.

In the last century, some of the greatest events have taken place that ever distressed and astonished the world. The cup of Providence, which contained

these ingredients, was full of mixture: and while it poured mercy upon some nations, it poured wrath upon others. Within this period, our own revolution has taken place, which gave birth to a nation. We have since been afflicted by war, and are again visited with peace. But what are these events when compared to the mighty changes in Europe?

In the commencement of the revolution, their antichrist and the man of sin was put down, the inquisition destroyed, and religious tyranny and persecution appeared to be fast coming to an end. Of late the Papal power has been restored again, and strengthened under the former dynasty. We seem evidently to be living under the seventh and last vial,* spoken of in the Revelations, which was poured out into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of Heaven, from the throne, saying, it is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not, since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, or factions, and the cities of the nations fell.

This description seems to apply to the present condition of the kingdoms and powers of Europe. What the present perplexity and distress of nations predict, and what events will immediately follow them, is uncertain. Their accomplishment may be reserved for another century. We are happily removed at a distance from that scene of devastation, oppression, and wretchedness, and may God preserve our affairs, both of church and state, from being either disturbed or effected by it, and give us peace always, and by all means.

* Revelations, xvi. 17.

We cannot expect this happiness apart from our own piety and prudence, vigilance and steadfastness. Though our Zion now enjoys a good degree of peace and tranquillity, her trials are not ended, nor is her warfare yet accomplished. As soon as our national disturbances are quieted, we are presented with symptoms of strife, debate, and divisions in our churches, in which many ministers of our holy religion are taking the lead. It has too often been the fault of christians, and of christian ministers, that they have disputed with the greatest warmth and bitterness, on subjects the least understood.—On subjects which, though often and long debated, never have been, and probably never will be fully settled in this world: and if ever they be clearly understood by us, it must be when we shall have arrived to the world of light above, where our knowledge will be perfected.

Among these subjects we may mention the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is unfortunate that this doctrine, which was so long debated in the third and fourth centuries, which caused so many councils of bishops, and was followed with so many anathemas, persecutions and banishments, should be revived again in this nineteenth century. If it be introduced as a dividing line between those who assume to themselves the name of orthodox, and who, of consequence, will view as heretics, all who may honestly differ from them, and should afterwards become a term of communion among ministers and churches, the consequences will be serious and hurtful.

On this subject, the inspired apostles only required of their hearers to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God: and his uninspired and fallible ministers

should demand no more of christian professors now, in order to their admission to gospel privileges, than a faith in the doctrine of the Son of God, as revealed in the holy scriptures, and not in the words of man's wisdom. To a private opinion of the true sense and meaning of the words of scripture, on this sublime and important subject, all christians have a fair and equal claim, and they ought alike to be tolerated in it.

The word Trinity is no where used in the holy scriptures, but is of man's invention. The patriarchs, prophets, and saints of old, who believed in a Messiah to come, could know nothing of this doctrine before God was manifested in the flesh. Yet, all these died in faith, and in the comfort of hope, not having received the promises. And the gospel, which reveals to us the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, no where suspends our final salvation, on the condition of our believing the existence of these in a particular mode of interpretation only, and otherwise than the scriptures themselves have manifested the doctrine to us. And no circumstantial and honest difference of opinion among christians, which does not bar their entrance into heaven, ought ever to interrupt their communion on earth. Ought we, and must we then be summoned to submit to the speculations and dogmas of assuming men, under the pain and penalty of being denounced as heretics, if we hesitate and refuse? Shall christian intercourse be suspended on such a condition? Must the peace, harmony, and fellowship between pastors and christian churches be hereby suspended and broken up? Must honest and pious christians, who would otherwise have remained happy in the bosom of their own church, and in communion with it, be made either to withdraw themselves

or be driven from it, by urging on them a doctrine, contained in a commentary darker than the text, in an explanation that needs to be further explained; a doctrine which, after all that has been written and said upon it, remains above their comprehension; and which, if received in the words of men rather than in the words of scripture could never make them the wiser or better practical christians. I mention these things because the times and seasons seem to call for them.

Amidst all the trials and afflictions of life, and the causes which continually agitate the world, it is happy for meek, patient, and hopeful christians, that the church is built on the rock of ages. That Christ is laid in Zion, for a foundation stone, elect and precious, and that so long as the foundation remains fixed, the building must stand, and the powers of neither earth or hell can overturn it; that whosoever falleth on this stone, shall himself be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

The christian cause has passed through and survived many fiery persecutions, in which the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, and brought new accessions to it. It will outlive all the storms that in future shall beat upon it, and continue to flourish still in new strength and beauty. The past and present numbers of the church are a pledge of a much larger increase in times to come.

To this end Christ, the true Messias, was cut off from the earth, and who shall declare his generation, or be able to count the number of his spiritual seed which shall be born to him? The work is with the Lord, and he will prosper it. Zion will still be enlarged in her borders and strengthened in her gates, and shall become more universal and conspicuous in the last

days, when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth through all generations. It began at the creation of the world; it will *close* at the dissolution of it. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered his kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all *in* all.

Thus far have I pursued my subject, and I cannot dismiss it, till I have ministered to you, my hearers, one of the strongest consolations of our holy religion.

We see and we feel that the fashion of this world passeth away, and that we ourselves pass away therewith. But the hour cometh when we and our dear children and friends who are gone from us, together with all who have pertained to the family of man through the successive generations of the earth, shall be gathered into one *great assembly;* for the dead are not finally perished. They rest in their graves, waiting for the redemption of the body. And we are assured that all who have, and all who shall go down into the pit, in different ages and periods, from the oldest to the latest sleeper in death, shall be quickened together by one voice, and at one time. Then this corruptible shall put on incorruption. The empire of death will be destroyed, and the ruins of it repaired, when, with all the ransomed of the Lord, we shall come to mount Zion, which is above, and shall be admitted to the

fruits of the tree of life, in the new and heavenly Jerusalem, where we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs, and all the followers of the Lamb, whom he hath redeemed to God, by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

And let all the people say, Amen.

POSTSCRIPT.

The careless inattention of many of our ancestors, and in particular, of town officers, to the duty of registring interesting events, and of recording and transmitting to posterity the doings of corporations, from time to time, renders it difficult to give a full and correct history of particular towns; therefore, in the history I shall here attempt to give of the town of Littleton, there will probably be several omissions, and possibly some errors, which the candid reader is desired to excuse, and to correct, if it be in his power. The following brief history is from all such means and information, as from various sources I have been able to collect.

Formerly this town was mostly a gore of land, not included within the limits of any of the extensive and previously incorporated towns around us. In this situation it remained for many years after Concord, Chelmsford, Groton, Stow, and Lancaster were incorporated. It was then but thinly inhabited by some English people, together with Indians living on their ancient settlements, and was known by the name of Nashoba.

Mr. Gookin, in his history of Indian tribes, gives the following account of this place:

"Nashoba is the sixth praying Indian town. This village is situated in a manner in the centre, between Chelmsford, Lancaster, Groton, and Concord, about 25 miles west-north-west from Boston. The inhabitants are about ten families, and consequently about fifty souls. This village is four miles square. The people live here as in Indian villages, upon planting corn, fishing, hunting, and sometimes labouring with the English people. Their ruler of late years was John Ahatawana, a pious man. After his decease, Pennekennet, or Pennekannet became their chief. Their teacher's name was John Thomas, a sober and pious man. The father of this John (Thomas) was murdered by the Maquas Indians, in a secret manner, as he was fishing for eels at his wear. He was a pious and useful man, and this place was considered as having sustained a great loss in him. In this place are orchards of apples. Near unto this town is a pond, wherein, at some seasons, there is a strange rumbling noise, as the Indians affirm; the reason thereof is not yet known. Some have considered the hills adjacent are hollow, wherein the wind being pent, is the cause of this rumbling, as in earthquakes. At this place they attend civil and religious order as in other praying towns; and they have a constable, and other officers. This town was deserted during the Maquas war, in 1676; but is now again peopled, and in a hopeful way to prosper."*

The pond above mentioned must be Nagog, probably so called by the Indians, who gave names to most of the remarkable lakes, rivers and ponds on this continent.

* Vide Gookin's Historical Collections, chap. 7. p. 188.

It lies on the eastern extremity of this town. Most of its waters are within the bounds of Littleton, and the residue of them in Acton.

The report of a strange noise, heard occasionally in this pond, was not without foundation. But the noise was not in the water, as they imagined, but from a hill, lying in a north-west direction, and about half a mile distant from the pond, partly in Littleton and partly in Westford, known by the name of Nashoba Hill. A rumbling noise from time to time has been heard from this hill, ever since the settlement of the town. It has been repeated within two years past, and is called the shooting of Nashoba Hill. Whether it be occasioned by the ground being hollow, as Mr. Gookin suggests, or by mineral and other substances lodged in its bowels, is uncertain.

This easterly part of the town still called Nashoba by many, formerly went by the name of Concord Village, which extended on westerly as the road now lies, almost to the common on which the first meeting-house stood. Whether it was so named, because a portion of the land belonged to Concord before this town was incorporated, or from some other circumstance, is unknown. At the south-easterly part of the town, and on the northerly side of a pond lying there, the Indians erected and maintained a fort, which gave to the waters adjoining the name of Fort Pond. The fort was built on an elevated spot of ground, occupied and improved by the Indians, according to their manner of cultivation. The principal owner, or oldest possessor of this plot of ground was an Indian by the name of Spean; and the land is known to this day by the name of Spean's field. The oldest apple-tree in the memory of the inhabitants of Littleton, and probably the first grown in the

town, was found standing on this field. Though it bore the marks of age and of some partial decay, yet it remained alive, and continued to bear fruit, till the twenty-third day of September, 1815, when it was blown down by the violent gale on that memorable day. The number and names of the first English inhabitants, in this place, and the precise time of their settling in it, are not distinctly known. There were probably some English settlers in this town, as early as 1642, when the people in Connecticut and Massachusetts were alarmed by a report, that under the influence and daring spirit of Miantonimo, sachem of the Narragansetts, a general conspiracy was forming among all the Indians, who were to rise at a time appointed, and cut off all the English in the country. So strong was the suspicion of this intended evil, that the Court of Massachusetts ordered, that all the Indians within their jurisdiction should be disarmed, which they submitted to.

That we have not fixed on too early a period for the first settling of some English people in this place, will appear probable, when we consider, that the town of Concord was incorporated the second day of September, 1635; and it is not improbable, that within seven years from that time, some English people might fix their residence among the Indians in that part of Littleton, called Nashoba, which is not more than eight miles from the centre of the town of Concord.

The oldest dwelling-house in this town, was erected as a garrison-house for the defence of the English settlers against their Indian enemies. This ancient and much decayed building, is situated on the south-easterly side of Nashoba Hill. It is in possession of the family of Mr. Samuel Reed, deceased, is now inhabited by his widow, and is said to have been standing more than

170 years. History informs us, that in the Maquas war, two men were killed at a farm about Concord, Isaac and Jacob Shepherd by name, about the middle of February, 1676; and a young maid, about 15 years of age, who had been set to watch the enemy, was carried captive, who strangely escaped away upon a horse the Indians had taken from Lancaster, a little before.* The place from which these captives were taken, was doubtless in that part of Littleton which is now called Nashoba, then Concord Village, which was adjoining to the bounds of Concord, before Acton was taken from it. The hill on which the young maid was placed to watch the enemy, lies about a third of a mile south of Nashoba Hill, on the road leading to Boston, and was called Quagana Hill. Tradition says, that this girl was carried by the savages to Nashawa, now called Lancaster, or to some place in the neighbourhood of it. That in the dead of night she took a saddle from under the head of her Indian keeper, when sunk in sleep increased by the fumes of ardent spirit—put the saddle on a horse—mounted on him—swam him across Nashawa river—and so escaped the hands of her captors, and arrived safe to her relatives and friends.

On the third of December, 1715, on a petition presented to the Legislature, by one Whitcomb and Powers, the inhabitants of this place were incorporated into a town, by the name of Littleton. It was so called after the name of the hon. George Lyttleton, Esq. Member of the British Parliament, and one of the Commissioners of the Treasury. In return for the honour done to his name, the noble gentleman presented this town with a Church Bell. But on account of an error in spelling the name, caused by substituting the *i* for the

* See Hubbard's History of Indian Wars, p. 153.

y, which formed the word Littleton, the valuable present miscarried, and was finally withheld, under the pretence that no such town as Lyttleton, to which the bell was to be presented, could any where be found. It is stated, that the person entrusted with this present made sale of it, and that the same bell is now in the possession and use of the town, in this commonwealth, which purchased it.

The first meeting house in the town was placed on a level and commodious spot of land, which has ever since lain common, on the north-easterly part of the town, and within half a mile of the southern boundary of the town of Westford. This place was probably agreed upon, partly from the eligible situation it afforded for public buildings, and from the south-easterly part of the town being first settled, and containing such a number of inhabitants, as when joined with others, then particularly accommodated, could decide any vote in the corporation. We have no record of the time in which the first meeting-house was erected. From the then infancy of the town, and other circumstances, it is probable that a considerable time elapsed between the raising and completing that public building.

At a public meeting, August 20, 1723, the town voted to accept the meeting-house, on condition that the undertakers should add some further finishings to it. It was improved as a house of public worship about 17 years from the time it was accepted.

The second meeting-house stood nearly on the same ground as does the present. It was built in 1740, and stood about 52 years.

The third and last meeting-house was built in 1793, and, on account of its neatness, accommodations, and

public appearance, we may truly say, the glory of this latter house far exceeds the glory of both the former.

We are unfortunately left without any history of the first gathering and planting of a church in this place. The first pastor either kept no record of the church under his care, or he neglected to leave it either with his successor, the church, or any of his surviving family. But we may fairly presume, without danger of erring materially, that a regular church existed in this place as early as the stated ministry of the gospel; for as soon as the people had provided for the regular administration of the word and ordinances by an ordained pastor, there must have been a christian church among them.

The first gospel minister in this town was the Rev. Benjamin Shattuck, who was ordained December 25, 1717. Having continued in the ministry nearly 13 years, he was, by an agreement with the people of his charge, dismissed from his pastoral office in June, 1730.

His successor, Rev. Daniel Rogers, was ordained March 15, 1731—2. He died November, 1782, in the 76th year of his age, and 51st of his ministry.

Rev. Edmund Foster was ordained Jan. 17, 1781.

In this church there have been eighteen deacons, who, as far as known, were elected to office, and officiated in the following order:

NAMES.	TIME WHEN ELECTED.
Dr. David Russell, Caleb Taylor, John Wood,	Unknown.
Benjamin Hoar,	—September 25th, 1741.
Jonathan Lawrence, Samuel Taylor,	August 26th, 1763.
Abraham Patch, Enoch Dole,	October 1st, 1756.
Oliver Hoar, Josiah Hartwell,	Unknown.

Jonathan Patch, Elias Taylor, } May 4th, 1786.

John Wood, Daniel Kimball, } May 24, 1793.

John Hartwell, Samuel Hoar, } December 20th, 1796.

David Lawrence, John Hartwell, 3d. } September 2d, 1813.

Dr. John Wood, Samuel Hoar, David Lawrence, John Hartwell, } *Present officiating Deacons.*

We shall conclude our history of the town of Littleton, by observing, that it lies about 28 miles, in a west-north-west direction from Boston. In the northerly part of the town, about a mile from its centre, a Post-Office is kept, by which passes the road from Boston to Keene, N. H. The town contains 130 dwelling-houses, about 150 families, and upwards of nine hundred inhabitants.

THE END.

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